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SB 966 and HB 6118
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
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Good afternoon Co Chairs Bartolomeo and Willis, Ranking Members Witkos and Betts, and esteemed members of the Higher Education committee. Thank you Representative Berthel for yielding part of your time for me this afternoon. It is an honor to be here testifying in front of this committee again. The bills that my colleagues and I testify about so passionately today are based on common sense and reason, and they appeal to the concerns and ideals that all of us share.

First, I'm proud to speak about SB 966, which would allow Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Nurses to administer SAFE kits at properly qualified university and college health care facilities. Today, you will hear specific testimonials from UConn students about the plight of sexual assault victims – members of our community that we fittingly refer to as survivors. Currently, the only way for these survivors to have one of these forensic evidence kits administered is to be taken to an eligible hospital. For a moment, I ask you all to imagine that your daughter, son, brother, sister, or friend has been sexually assaulted. Instead of receiving care at the place they go where they are sick, injured, or need other medical help, they are ushered into an ambulance. Then, they must take a ride to a hospital, be preliminarily examined by a medical professional, and wait for someone who could be on the other side of the state to arrive and apply a kit to collect evidence from the assault that took place. Now, please ask yourself, would your relative or friend go through all of this added trauma following an assault to have evidence collected from their body? Would you? I can tell you that far too many survivors do not. From speaking with our Dean of Students, I can tell you that there are many more sexual assault incidents that take place than the amount of students that are transported to Windham Hospital to have evidence collected. I know that we all care about the victims in our society, so I hope that this bill will be met with overwhelming support. The victims on our campus should be able to be treated in a place where they feel comfortable, so that more perpetrators can be brought to justice and victims can be given the treatment they need.

Today, you will also hear testimony from my fellow Huskies in support of a HB 6118, which would add an extra undergraduate student member to the UConn Board of Trustees. Less than 30% of the funding that is used to operate the University comes from the State of Connecticut. With the percentage of state funding falling, a greater percentage of the funding used to operate the University must come from student fees and tuition. With about a third of the funding coming from these means, why should students only have 2 seats on the 21 member board that governs the use of this money? So much emphasis is being placed on the way higher education institutions spend student, state, and endowed money, so it is more important than ever that the student voice be taken into consideration. With student enrollment rising rapidly, it only makes sense that students should have increased representation. There is perhaps no better place to speak about proper representation than the state legislature, where the concept is held so near and dear to you, the elected representatives of our state.

Thank you for your time this afternoon and I hope that you find the testimony of my colleagues compelling. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.